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A PEOPLE'S EUROPE: An information handbook on the rights of Europeans ...  
... based on Community legislation.

It is not enough to have rights; you must also know them. This is not an easy task, even for specialists, given that the rights of European Community citizens - your rights - are being created virtually every day. Hence the decision of the European Commission's information department to publish an information handbook\* outlining both individual and collective rights deriving from Community legislation, together with a description of Community activities and programmes which affect people's daily lives.

The Handbook runs to some 400 loose-leaf pages for easy up-dating. It was described as "an encyclopaedia of the European citizen's rights" by Carlo Ripa di Meana, the EC Commissioner for press and information, when he presented it to the media.

"It is important for everyone to know that as citizens of the European Community they already have certain rights, including workers' rights, the right to move freely within the Community and to enjoy equality of treatment, irrespective of one's sex", Mr Ripa di Meana pointed out. "These rights having been won, we must avail ourselves of them in our daily lives, invoke them firmly when national governments show a reluctance to concede them and defend them before the courts. But in order to claim one's rights, one must know them."

The Commission's information Handbook seeks to answer this need. It is being made available, free of cost, to members of the European Parliament and the media as well as to interested associations and organizations, whether national or European. It can also be consulted in the 19 press and information offices the Commission maintains in the 12 member states, and copies of the relevant extracts obtained.

The list of subjects covered is very long and detailed, and includes virtually all the topics likely to interest Europeans, together with the problems they can meet in their daily lives, whether they relate to social security, training and professional mobility, freedom of movement and the right of establishment, job hunting, workers' rights, health, etc. This wealth of information has been grouped into 11 chapters for easy reference.

The Handbook will be up-dated regularly, thus adding to its usefulness as a tool for the ordinary citizen and another building block in the construction of Europe.

\* A People's Europe: An Information Handbook. Published by the Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General for Information, Communication and Culture, Brussels.

CONSUMERS: More reliable toys in two years' time (in principle)

The Twelve agree on a draft European regulation.

The 63 million or so youngsters living in the European Community should have better and more reliable toys from 1990 to amuse themselves with. The 12 Community ministers responsible for consumer protection reached agreement last month on a draft European regulation which should come into force in two years' time, if all goes well. Meanwhile, the text must be studied by the European Parliament.

The draft directive is based on the Community's "new approach" to questions regarding technical standards. It is the first time it has been applied to a consumer product in wide use, however. The text sets out the basic safety requirements which all toys sold in the 12-nation Community must meet as regards mechanical, chemical and electrical characteristics; inflammability; hygiene; radioactivity, etc. As regards the detailed technical specifications, the draft refers to the harmonized standards to be drawn up by the experts.

Before a toy can be put on sale, the manufacturer or importer will have to see that it carries the stamp indicating that it conforms to Community regulations. The draft directive also provides for checks to be carried out in factories and importers' warehouses.

RESEARCH: The EC moves into top gear

The Twelve agree to spend more on ESPRIT and BRITE.

European scientists and researchers can now press ahead in such fields as information technology, the application of new technologies to the older industries and protection against nuclear radiation. The European Community's research ministers agreed last month to provide additional funds for three Community research programmes.

Some ECU 1,600m.\* of Community funds will be made available over a 5-year period for the second stage of the ESPRIT programme, covering information technology and its applications. "ESPRIT II" will make it possible to coordinate 30% of all basic research in this sector.

ECU 185m., rather than ECU 125m., will be devoted to the BRITE programme, which seeks to equip traditional industries with modern technology. Finally, the Twelve agreed to increase by ECU 10m. the sum provided for research into radiation protection, bringing the total to ECU 58m. Ministers took the view that the extra money was needed after Chernobyl.

\* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.69 or IR£ 0.78.

EDUCATION: ERASMUS enjoys an active first year

The European Commission has released the second allocation of aid for 1987/88.

In the second year of its existence, (1987/88) the European Community programme ERASMUS has already financed nearly 400 inter-university cooperation projects, involving more than 850 institutions of higher education in the 12-nation European Community. Shortly before the Christmas holidays, the European Commission released the second allocation of financial aid for the 1987/88 academic year, thus bringing the total amount of Community funding for ERASMUS to ECU 11.2 million\*. The member states have also contributed to it financially.

The cooperation projects cover the most diverse fields, although the main ones are languages (nearly 20% of all projects); business and management studies (17%) and the training of engineers (13%). ERASMUS projects also cover the natural sciences, law, medicine and other fields of study.

Institutions of higher education from all 12 EC countries are taking part. More than half the cooperation projects involve British or French universities; over 40% of them interest German institutions, while Italian and Spanish universities are taking part in more than 20% of the projects.

Educational institutions wanting to take part in ERASMUS during the 1988/89 academic year must apply to the European Commission before 31 January 1988.

\* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.69 or IR£ 0.78.

SPACE: In order that Europeans, too, may benefit

Cooperation between the 12-nation EC and the 13-nation ESA takes shape.

Europeans are getting their act together in space. The European Space Agency+ launched its ambitious programme, covering the period up to the year 2000, last November, while the European Commission announced last December that it will be sending proposals to the Twelve this summer for cooperation between the Community and the ESA. Cooperation between them should allow European industry to take full advantage of the commercial spin-offs from space-related activities.

The ESA has decided to finance the construction of a new ARIANE rocket and to put European astronauts in space. The European Commission, while welcoming the decision, has pointed out that the Americans will be spending three times as much on space research as the Europeans in the 1990s. Which is why it is pressing for maximum cooperation.

+ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

AGRICULTURE: Farm incomes decline in 1987 ...

... but there are sharp differences from one Community country to another.

Farm incomes dropped by 3.6% in 1987 in the European Community as a whole (excluding Portugal, however), according to estimates published end December by Eurostat, the EC's statistical office. But the picture was very different from one member country to another. While Irish farmers saw their incomes rise by nearly 12%, their German counterparts suffered a fall of around 17%.

Spain, the Netherlands and Luxembourg recorded the largest increases in farm incomes, after Ireland, according to Eurostat estimates. Britain, France and Greece recorded falls of between 2 and 3%, and Italy, Belgium, Denmark - and of course Germany - of 6% and more. The experts point out that in most EC countries a sharp fall last year follows a strong rise in 1986 - and vice versa.

Community farm incomes (excluding Portugal) have varied very little since the beginning of the 1980s, according to Eurostat. But here also the differences from one country to the next seem very great. Thus farm incomes rose by at least 30% in Spain and Luxembourg, by 20 to 30% in the Netherlands and Denmark and by roughly 7% in Greece and Ireland. But they have remained virtually unchanged in Britain, France and Belgium and have even fallen by around 10% in Germany and Italy.

TRAINING: An extra ECU 300 million for the end of the year

The Commission "finds" more money for vocational training programmes.

Europeans who are threatened by unemployment, or have already been laid off, will benefit from the additional funds which the European Social Fund, the European Community's "welfare fund", is providing for vocational training. Despite the fact that all the sums available for 1987 had been spent, in principle, by last April, the European Commission last year found ECU 323m. which government departments in the 12 member states had simply failed to claim in 1986.

More than three-quarters of this sum will be used to help the under-25s. Britain and Italy will receive the lion's share (nearly 20% of the total in each case). Spain is to receive 15%, Ireland 11% and France 10%, with the other member states receiving more modest amounts.

\* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.69 or IR£ 0.78.

SINGLE MARKET: How to find out the standards in use elsewhere

ICONE, a new tool for European companies.

European companies received a very useful present with which to ring in the new year. It is an information system which allows them to find out rapidly the technical standards in force in European Community or EFTA countries+ which correspond to European or international standards. All that interested companies have to do is to contact their national standards institutes (e.g. the British Standards Institute).

This new service is being offered by ICONE (Comparative Index of European National Standards) which operates in conjunction with a data base prepared by the European Standards Committee with financial help from the European Commission. National standards institutes can get from the data base the information sought by firms in their countries.

ICONE can already provide information on some 40,000 national standards. In another two years at most it will be in a position to give information on those national standards which do not correspond to any European or international standard - and there are some 100,000 of them. Small and medium-sized businesses should find ICONE a great help in their search for markets in other European countries.

\* The European Free Trade Association (Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland).

SINGLE MARKET: Coming - a free market in modems and terminals

The European Commission undertakes to eliminate the monopolies enjoyed by national PTTs.

European consumers may soon be able to choose freely the modem or terminal they want from among the various models available anywhere in the 12-nation European Community. The European Commission has embarked on the task of eliminating the monopoly for the import and sale of such equipment which the PTTs enjoy in several Community countries.

Under the Treaty of Rome, the Community's "constitution", national monopolies, such as PTTs, cannot discriminate between the member states as regards the supply of equipment; in practice, orders are often placed exclusively with domestic manufacturers.

The European Commission asked the Belgian PTT at the end of December to throw open the supply of modems to firms throughout the Community. It had already made a similar demand on the German federal authorities in Bonn. Meanwhile, Rome and The Hague have undertaken to end the exclusive rights enjoyed by their PTTs. At a time when the range of modems and terminals is growing, consumers have an even greater interest in being able to choose freely.

TRANSPORT: Towards more European roads and railways

ECU 53 million\* of Community funds for 17 projects.

Road and rail links between the different regions of the 12-nation European Community should improve, thanks to the funds, totalling some ECU 53m., released by the European Commission at the end of December to help finance 17 projects in all four corners of the Community.

The lion's share (ECU 24.2m.) will be used to improve the major road and rail links between the various Community countries, and more especially the roads and motorways leading to the Channel tunnel, the rail link between the Netherlands and Germany and the railway line between Thessalonika and the Yugoslav border, which links Greece to northern Italy and Germany.

Some ECU 20m. have been set aside for the Community's newest members, Spain and Portugal. It will be used to (1) modernize railway lines linking Lisbon and Porto to Spain and Madrid to Barcelona, and (2) finance the construction of the motorway linking Madrid and Burgos to France. Another ECU 6m. will be devoted to the north-south motorways in Ireland and Greece.

Finally, the Commission has allocated ECU 2.8m. for a series of studies, covering such subjects as motorway safety, the effects of the APT on the environment and the construction of fixed links between the Danish islands and the mainland.

\* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.69 or IR£ 0.78.

ENERGY: Open, Sesame ... to the European public

A specialized data base, now accessible to everyone.

Companies, associations and all Europeans interested in the new energy technologies can now find out about the contents and results of hundreds of projects subsidized by the European Commission. All they have to do is consult the data base SESAME, which was opened to the public in mid-December.

SESAME contains information, which is being continually up-dated, on some 600 projects relating to the exploration, production, transport and storage of oil and natural gas, as well as nearly 1,500 projects in the fields of energy saving, renewable energy sources and new uses for traditional forms of energy, such as the liquifaction of coal.

Further information on SESAME can be had from the Danish Host Organization, DATACENTRALEN (Att. DC Host Centre), Landlystvej 40, DK-2650 Hvidovre, Tel. 45-1-758122; telex 27122 dc dk.

SPORT: Off to a quick start

Mr Ripa di Meana gives his fellow Commissioners their first report on communication through sport.

Sport is a powerful means of communication between people, as was underlined by the Adonnino report on A People's Europe, adopted by the Milan summit in 1985. It plays a growing role in the lives of an even larger number of people in the European Community. This is clearly reflected in media coverage of sporting events. Most newspapers devote between 10% and 35% of their pages to sport and the sports department is often the largest on the editorial side. Radio and television devote 10% on average of broadcasting time to sport, with Italy's RAI devoting 12% and the BBC 15%. Over 80% of the programmes exchanged within Eurovision are sports programmes, with current affairs accounting for no more than 8%, music 3% and even variety shows a mere 4%.

The 1985 Adonnino report outlined three areas of activity for the European Commission: (1) the organization of cycle and other races over a course taking in several Community countries; (2) the creation of Community teams, to compete against joint teams from other geographical groupings, and (3) the introduction of a Community emblem, to be worn by sportsmen and women alongside their national colours at major sporting events, especially those organized internationally.

In submitting to the European Commission its first report on Community policy in this field, the Commissioner with responsibility for sport, Carlo Ripa di Meana, described both the progress to date and the obstacles he had encountered. The fact is the world of sport is governed by a complex network of European and international bodies and regulations.

The creation and promotion of sporting events limited to the 12 Community countries are still meeting with numerous difficulties everywhere. Even so, it was possible to hold the first European Community swimming championships in Leeds in 1987; the second will take place in Luxembourg on April 16 and 17, 1988. The European Commission has also given both patronage and a Community impetus to a series of events which are now firmly established in the international sporting calendar. They include the European Community Cycle Race and the European Yacht Race.

The most ambitious event, the European Community Games, is still at the project stage. A sort of mini-Olympics, the Games would take place in all 12 member countries, with each staging two events. Television coverage would link the events together and ensure them a Community-wide audience. The first Games should be held from April 21 to May 1, 1989, just a few weeks before the elections to the European Parliament.



(Contd.)

There are far fewer tangible results as regards the creation of Community sports teams. Even so, preliminary contacts could lead to Community teams being set up for an EC-US swimming competition and for the next Americas Cup Yacht race in 1990.

Attempts to have athletes from the Community countries wear a Community emblem at this year's Olympic Games in Seoul have also run into difficulties. If the project should fail in the short run, the 1992 Olympic Games, to be held in two member states, France and Spain, should offer a more favourable political climate for highlighting the Community's presence at the Games.

Organizing sports events is an expensive business, while the sums available under the European Commission's information budget are very modest. Clearly, more money is needed if the Commission is to carry out more effectively the mission entrusted to it at the Milan summit. It would prove a sound investment, going by the results to date.

#### CONSUMERS: Will the new electronic credit cards be European?

The European Commission suggests a code of good conduct to the banks.

Credit cards very soon will no longer be magnetic but electronic. They will incorporate a microchip, just like the telephone cards in use in some European countries. But could the same credit cards be used from Glasgow to Athens and from Dublin to Seville?

The European Commission hopes it can. It has just asked interested banks and businesses to set up a Community-wide electronic payments network by 31 December 1992, the date set for the completion of the single European market.

The Commission has also sent them a code of good conduct, setting out the principles it would like all banks in the 12 European Community countries to follow. Among them: protecting the confidential nature of bank accounts; limiting bank charges to individuals and businesses to reasonable levels and ensuring that competition among banks is fair.

The Commission is also hoping that the banks will agree among themselves on the technical standards for the new electronic cards, as they did in the case of the magnetic cards.